DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 089 168 CG 008 770

AUTHOR Walls, Richard T.; Gulkus, Steven P.
TITLE Reinforcers, Values, and Vocational Maturity in Adults.
INSTITUTION West Virginia Univ., Morgantown.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C.; West Virginia State Board of Vocational Education, Charleston. Div. of Vocational Rehabilitation.
PUB DATE Feb 74
NOTE 13p.; Presented at the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, Illinois, April, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Counseling; Career Choice; *Occupational Aspiration; Personal Values; Research Projects; *Values; Vocational Counseling; *Vocational Maturity; *Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Adult Vocational Maturity Index

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to test the notion that job reinforcers and occupational values are related to vocational maturity. The importance of 21 reinforcers and 11 values were rated by 207 vocational rehabilitation clients and 59 graduate students. The dependent measure was the Adult Vocational Maturity Index. Older subjects with more education were more vocationally mature. Those subjects who considered -- (a) getting a feeling of accomplishment, (b) doing work without feeling it is morally wrong, (c) having steady employment, (d) independence, (3) opportunity to use special talents, (f) challenge, and (g) self-satisfaction -- important, were high in vocational maturity. Subjects who considered such things as -- (a) telling other workers what to do, (b) having the position of "somebody" in the community, and (c) prestige -- important, were lower in vocational maturity. The data indicates that choice of occupational reinforcers and preferences for specified values are reflected in the individual's "vocational maturity." (Author)

ED 089168

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Reinforcers, Values, and Vocational Maturity in Adults[1]

Richard T. Walls[2] and Steven P. Gulkus

West Virginia University

[1]This research was supported in part by the West Virginia Regional Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (West Virginia Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and West Virginia University), through the Social and Rehabilitation Service, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

[2]Requests for reprints should be directed to Richard T. Walls, Research and Training Center, 806 Forestry Tower, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia 26506.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CG 008 770

Reinforcers, Values, and Vocational Maturity in Adults

A developmental view of occupational attitudes and behaviors treats vocational development as a continuum (Super, 1957). Vocational maturity (VM) may then be considered a point on this continuum denoting the individual's degree of attained development. Advanced stages of such maturity may be characterized by increased realism, stability, and wisdom of preferences related to increasing amounts of information and planning (Baldwin, 1955; Ginzberg, Ginzberg, Axelrad, & Herma, 1951). Society expects older children and adolescents to display increasingly mature vocational behavior; however, some adults appear to never fulfill such expectations.

In most instances these societal demands take the form of comparison with implicit normative functions. Such intuitive comparisons are usually based on either chronological age or the behavior of others dealing with similar developmental tasks (Super, Crites, Hummel, Moser, Overstreet, & Warnath, 1957). Although attempts have been made to operationalize these concepts for adolescents (Super & Overstreet, 1960), little attention has been given to assessment and construct validation of VM in adults.

Sheppard (1971) developed a measure of VM for adults, the Adult Vocational Maturity Inventory (AVMI). Following item analysis via (a) item correlations with the total test score and (b) ability of items to

discriminate as a measure of criterion group validity on a sample of 200 subjects, 40 items were selected for cross validation with a holdout sample of 200 subjects. The scale (AVMI, Form II, Likert response format) was reported to have a Spearman-Brown split half corrected reliability coefficient of .84. This appears adequate for research purposes in view of the fact that this formula is often considered to yield a conservative estimate of reliability (Guilford, 1956). Further, Sheppard (1971) indicates the AVMI was able to discriminate between sample groups of unemployed men, vocational trainees, and graduate students.

The present study tests the notion that the job reinforcers and occupational values an individual holds important should be related to his VM. The Minnesota Job Description Questionnaire (MJDQ) involves 21 occupational "reinforcers characteristics" (Borgen, Weiss, Tinsley, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1968). Tinsley and Weiss (1971) used the MJDQ to identify occupational reinforcer patterns. These 21 reinforcers (e.g., making use of your own abilities) were adapted for use in the present study. The occupational values ranked by subjects in the present investigation were those used by Fretz (1972). He was able to use these values (e.g., prestige) in a discriminant analysis to differentiate between five groups of preprofessional students.

The AVMI should differentiate graduate students from vocational rehabilitation clients as it did in the previously cited study (Sheppard, 1971), with the former group showing greater VM. It is further hypothesized that individuals who consider such occupational reinforcers as -- (a) making use of your own abilities, (b) getting a feeling of accomplishment,

(c) trying out your own ideas, (d) doing work without feeling it is morally wrong, and (e) having steady employment -- important should be more vocationally mature. Similarly, subjects with high VM should value (a)independence, (b) security, (c) opportunity to use special talents, (d) challenge, and (e) self satisfaction. Individuals who consider important such reinforcers and values as -- (a) telling other workers what to do, (b) having the position of "somebody" in the community, and (c) prestige -- may be low in vocational maturity. Although the reinforcers and values noted above are of particular interest, all items included within those instruments will be analyzed with VM as the dependent measure.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 207 vocational rehabilitation clients (142 males and 65 females) and 59 graduate students (28 males and 31 females) at West Virginia University. The vocational rehabilitation clients were trainees in various job training areas at the West Virginia Rehabilitation Center. The mean ages and standard deviations for the vocational rehabilitation clients and graduate students respectively were M = 25.22, SD = 9.80; M = 29.19, SD = 7.77.

Procedure

The 266 subjects were each tested on the MJDQ reinforcer items (Borgen et al. 1968) and the Occupational Values items (Fretz, 1972.) These items, which may be found in Tables 2 and 3 were to be used as independent variables. The response format for the reinforcer items was a 5-point Likert mode, 5

being Strongly Agree to 1 being Strongly Disagree, that these reinforcers "are important when on the job." The values were ranked by the subjects from 1 to 11, with 1 being Most Important to 11 being Least Important "for career satisfaction." Demographic data were also collected, including age, sex, and education.

The dependent measure was also responded to within the same battery of materials. The AVMI (Sheppard, 1971) as noted previously has been established as a measure of adult vocational maturity (VM). It contains 40 items of the form, "A person can do anything he wants as long as he tries hard." The response format for these items was a Likert 5-point scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Possible VM scores thus ranged from 40 to 200. A lower total score indicates greater VM.

Results

A total of 36 separate one-way analyses of variance were computed to determine the nature of relationships of the variables studied to VM. In each of these analyses the independent variable was split into two levels, and VM was the dependent measure. These VM means, F values, and probabilities are reported for demographic information in Table 1. In that table it may be noted that subjects (a) below 21 years of age, (b) with less than 12th grade education, (c) vocational rehabilitation clients were significantly less vocationally mature than their counterparts. Males and females did not differ on VM.

The occupational reinforcer characteristics as adapted from the MJDQ (Borgen et al., 1968) were each split to facilitate

the analyses of variance. For each item "strongly agree" and "agree" were considered high for the purpose of these analyses, while lesser choices were considered low. For example, if a subject agreed that "making use of your own abilities" was important when on the job he was placed in the high group for analysis of VM for that item. This, of course, did not effect his placement for analyses of other items. These VM means, F values, and probabilities are presented in Table 2. The reader will note in Table 2 that subjects who considered -- (a) getting a feeling of accomplishment, (b) doing work without feeling that it is morally wrong, and (c) having steady employment -- important were significantly more vocationally mature than those rating them less than important. However, those subjects who considered -- (a) being busy all the time, (b) telling other workers what to do, (c) being paid well in comparison with other workers, (d) doing your work alone, (e) having the position of "somebody" in the community, and (f) having something different to do everyday -- important were significantly less vocationally mature. Other comparisons were non-significant ($p > .05$).

Occupational Values (Fretz, 1972) were used in the third series of analyses of variance. For each item, ranks of 1 through 5 were grouped as high, while ranks of 6 through 11 were considered low importance. Accordingly, the VM means and results are reported in Table 3 for each of the 11 Occupational Values. In Table 3 it is evident that subjects who considered -- (a) independence, (b) opportunity to use special talents, (c) challenge, and (d) self-satisfaction -- important were significantly more vocationally mature than those who ranked these values as low in

importance. In contrast, subjects who saw -- (a) pay received, (b) security, (c) prestige, and (d) advancement -- as highly important were significantly less vocationally mature. The remaining values items were nonsignificant ($p > .05$).

Discussion

The results reported herein are largely as would be expected, and as such contribute to the construct validity of the Adult Vocational Maturity Inventory (Sheppard, 1971) in particular and to the concept of adult vocational maturity in general. Occupational attitudes may be used to represent or estimate an individual's rate or degree of vocational development. Choice of occupational reinforcers as well as preferences for specified values are reflected in, and related to, the individual's "vocational maturity."

These data provide a replication of Sheppard's (1971) finding that graduate students are more vocationally mature than vocational trainees. Greater VM for older subjects with more education appears to relate to this result. In addition, a number of other interesting findings are evident. Subjects who value a feeling of accomplishment, morality, steady employment, independence, use of special talents, challenge, and self-satisfaction would be expected to demonstrate mature vocational behavior. Those who place highest value on being busy all the time, telling others what to do, high pay, working alone, being "somebody", doing something different every day, security, prestige, and advancement were less vocationally mature in the present study than those to whom these were not as important.

If vocational attitudes and behaviors develop over time through processes of growth and learning, the behavioral repertoire should become increasingly reality-oriented (Super & Overstreet, 1960). For individuals who have had limited learning opportunities, basic concerns such as high salary, prestige and telling others what to do are to be reasonably expected. Persons who have developed an extensive behavioral repertoire, through learning to meet the characteristic demands of vocational developmental tasks, are able to seek personal rather than public accomplishment, and to use special talents to gain the self-satisfaction associated with successfully meeting a challenge. Does a given client have sufficient occupation-oriented maturity to be able to deal adequately with required choice-making tasks? Presumably, vocational counselors would be in a better position to facilitate the process if they were able to answer this question. Additional work is required to provide normative and adjunct information contributing to validity of the vocational maturity construct and to test its utility in analysis of adult vocational behavior.

References

Borgen, F. H., Weiss, D. J., Tinsley, E. A., Dawis, R. V., & Lofquist, L. H. The measurement of occupational reinforcer patterns. University of Minnesota: Work Adjustment Project Industrial Relations Center, 1968.

Baldwin, A. L. Behavior and development in childhood. New York: Dryden, 1955.

Fretz, B. R. Occupational values as discriminants of preprofessional student groups. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1972, 2, 233-237.

Ginzberg, E., Ginzberg, S. W., Axelrad, S., & Herma, J. L. Occupational choice. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.

Guilford, J. P. Fundamental statistics in psychology and education. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956.

Sheppard, D. L. The measurement of vocational maturity in adults. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1971, 1, 399-406.

Super, D. E. The psychology of careers. New York: Harper & Row, 1957.

Super, D. E., Crites, J. O. Hummel, R. C., Moser, H. P., Overstreet, P. L., & Warnath, C. F. Vocational development: A framework for research. New York: Teachers College Press, 1957.

Super, D. E., & Overstreet, P. L. The vocational maturity of ninth-grade boys. New York: Teachers College Press, 1960.

Tinsley, H. E. A. & Weiss, D. J. A multitrait-multimethod comparison of job reinforcer ratings of supervisors and supervisees. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1971, 1, 287-289.

Table 1

VM Means and Analyses of Variance Results for Demographic Characteristics

	Levels	VM Mean	F Value	Probability
Age	<21 years	122.2	24.11	<.0001
	≥21 years	109.4[a]		
Sex	Male	114.3	0.15	ns
	Female	113.2		
Education	<12th grade	122.4	32.69	<.0001
	≥12th grade	105.0		
Group	Rehab. Clients	118.8	67.44	<.0001
	Grad. Students	96.1		

[a]Lower total score indicates a higher level of VM.

Table 2

VM Means and Analyses of Variance Results for

Occupational Reinforcers

Reinforcer	Rated Importance	VM Mean	F Value	Probability
Making use of your own abilities.	High	113.7	1.07	ns
	Low	92.0		
Getting a feeling of accomplishment.	High	112.7	4.28	<.05
	Low	122.8		
Being busy all the time.	High	117.3	20.56	<.0001
	Low	104.8		
Having opportunities for advancement.	High	113.5	0.04	ns
	Low	114.3		
Telling other workers what to do.	High	122.8	9.72	<.01
	Low	112.0		
Having a company which administers its policies fairly.	High	112.8	1.95	ns
	Low	117.7		
Being paid well in comparison with other workers.	High	115.3	4.26	<.05
	Low	109.5		
Having co-workers who are easy to make friends with.	High	113.1	1.18	ns
	Low	117.1		
Trying out your own ideas.	High	112.9	1.37	ns
	Low	116.8		
Doing your work alone.	High	119.1	15.44	<.001
	Low	109.1		
Doing work without feeling that it is morally wrong.	High	111.0	6.54	<.01
	Low	117.7		
Receiving recognition for the work you do.	High	113.5	0.16	ns
	Low	114.8		
Making decisions on your own.	High	113.5	0.09	ns
	Low	114.5		

Table 2 (continued)

Reinforcer	Rated Importance	VM Mean	F Value	Probability
Having steady employment.	High	112.4	11.33	<.001
	Low	129.8		
Having work where you do things for other people.	High	113.7	0.01	ns
	Low	113.3		
Having the position of "somebody" in the community.	High	117.3	9.78	<.01
	Low	109.4		
Having bosses who back up their men (with top management).	High	112.9	1.31	ns
	Low	116.9		
Having bosses who train their men well.	High	113.8	0.29	ns
	Low	111.2		
Having something different to do everyday.	High	117.7	11.11	<.001
	Low	109.2		
Having good working conditions.	High	113.7	0.13	ns
	Low	111.7		
Planning your work with little supervision.	High	113.8	0.03	ns
	Low	113.4		

[a]Lower total score indicates a higher level of VM.

Table 3

VM Means and Analyses of Variance Results for

Occupational Values

Value	Rated Importance	VM Mean	F Value	Probability
Pay received	High	114.2	17.87	<.0001
	Low	103.0[a]		
Security	High	112.9	6.95	<.01
	Low	105.8		
Prestige	High	115.1	3.81	<.05
	Low	109.3		
Advancement	High	114.2	5.59	<.05
	Low	108.2		
Variety of duties	High	110.9	0.00	ns
	Low	110.8		
Working conditions	High	112.2	1.69	ns
	Low	108.9		
Independence	High	106.7	6.98	<.01
	Low	113.4		
Opportunity to use special talents	High	106.7	7.92	<.01
	Low	113.9		
Challenge	High	106.1	11.33	<.001
	Low	114.5		
Self-satisfaction	High	108.0	11.44	<.001
	Low	116.8		
Fringe benefits	High	112.2	0.54	ns
	Low	109.9		

[a]Lower total score indicates a higher level of VM.